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SIPDIS

DEPT FOR NEA/ARPI, NEA/PPD, NEA/P, AND INR/R/MR

LONDON FOR GOLDRICH
PARIS FOR ZEYA
USCENTCOM FOR PLUSH
FOREIGN PRESS CENTER/ASILAS

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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: THE NEW IRAQI GOVERNMENT, A NEW ROAD
MAP, AND PALESTINIAN PRISONERS OF WAR

A Tough Job Ahead

1. On April 15, government-owned Arabic daily "Oman" carried an editorial entitled, "The Iraqi Government's Huge Task":

"The soon to be announced Iraqi government has a huge mission before it. It must bring security and stability to Iraq, as well as revive the Iraqi soul and strengthen the sense of national unity that has been whittled away over the last two years. The National Assembly was smart to include all factions of Iraqi society in the process of electing the President's Council. This ensured that Iraq's greater interests are protected and help to facilitate the rebuilding of the country. Perhaps the desire for a strong and stable Iraq also led Sunnis to accept leadership positions in the new government even though they chose not to participate in the recent elections."

Release Of Palestinian Prisoners

2. On April 18, the privately-owned Arabic daily "al-Watan" carried an editorial entitled, "Israel's Treatment of Palestinian Prisoners of War Shows Bad Intentions":

"After the Sharm al-Sheikh Summit, the Palestinian President promised his people that he would work to obtain the release of Palestinian POW's from Israeli prisons. However, to embarrass him, Sharon only released a few Jordanian prisoners... International human rights groups should launch a campaign to inform people about Israel's inhumane treatment of Palestinian POW's to facilitate their release. The release of a significant number of prisoners would do much to convince the Palestinians that it is possible to reach a fair and just solution to the Israeli-Palestinian question with Israel."

Israel Calls For A New Road Map

3. The government-owned Arabic daily "Oman" published an editorial on April 18 entitled, "Israel's Manipulation of the Road Map":

"Some days ago in Cairo, the Foreign Minister of Israel called for the creation of a new road map between Israel and Arab countries that would lead to the normalization of relations. This means that Bush's Israeli-Palestinian road map has no value, especially after Bush supported Israel's demand to retain its settlements in the West Bank. Israel's retention of the settlements prolongs the occupation and makes it impossible to create a viable Palestinian state."

STEWART